

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
OF THE
ST. ALBANS
URBAN SANITARY DISTRICT.

—•— FOR THE YEAR 1900. —•—

BY

JOHN MORISON,

M.D., D.P.H., F.G.S., ETC.,

Medical Officer of Health,

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For the Year 1900.

TO THE MAYOR AND CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF
ST. ALBAN.

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to report that during the year 1900 there were 268 deaths in the City of St. Alban. Of these deaths 53 occurred in the Abbey Division, 111 in St. Peter's, 33 in St. Michael's, 8 in Sandridge, 46 in the Union Workhouse, 13 in the St. Albans and Mid Herts Hospital, 3 in the Sisters' Hospital, and 1 in the Prison. Of the deaths recorded 135 were of males, and 133 of females. In the year 1899 135 deaths were recorded. Taking the population of the City, as estimated up to the middle of 1900, to be 16,400—this would give us a death-rate of 16·3 per annum. But we have to take into consideration that of the 63 deaths which occurred in Public Institutions, 39 were of persons who did not belong to our City; namely 28 in the Union Infirmary, 10 in the Hospital, and 1 in the Prison. Besides these cases, 4 deaths occurred of non-residents, one of a girl who died at the Training Home for Servants in Victoria Street, shortly after her arrival there, another of a woman residing in Redbourn, who died suddenly at the Midland Coffee Tavern, and two infants, the children of vagrants, who died at the Common Lodging Houses, making a total of 43 to be deducted. Then we have to add 1 case, that of a man belonging to St. Albans, who died at Hill End Asylum, which gives us 42. If we deduct 42 from 268, we get 226 as the corrected number of

deaths, and 13·7 as the true death-rate. In 1899 the total death-rate was 14·6, and the true death-rate 12·3. So that in 1900 there was a considerable increase in our mortality. The principal cause of our increased death-rate was undoubtedly the epidemic of Influenza, with which, in common with most other parts of the country, we were visited in the early part of last year, and which was directly responsible for 9 deaths, and no doubt acted as a contributory cause of death in a number of other cases. Our death-rate, however, is still well under the average of the last 10 years. The most unhealthy months were January and February; and the months with the lowest mortality were March and November.

Of the total deaths, 38 were of children under 1 year of age, giving us a death-rate for infants of 2·3, as against 2·7 for the previous year. Amongst children between 1 and 5 there were 15 deaths, as against 16 in 1899. And there were 107 deaths amongst persons of 65 years old and upwards, as against 87 in the year preceding. The excess of deaths is therefore, to a great extent, due to an increased mortality amongst old people, while there is an actual decrease in the number of deaths amongst young children.

There were 38 deaths from Diseases of the Respiratory System, as against 46 in 1899; 57 from Heart Disease, as against 36; and 39 from Diseases of the Nervous System, as against 22 in the previous year.

There were 23 deaths from Phthisis, and 7 from other Tubercular diseases, as against 22 and 5 in 1899, giving us a death-rate from Tubercle of 1·8, as against 1·6 in the previous year.

There were 12 deaths from Cancer and other Malignant Diseases, as against 11 in 1899, and the death-rate for Cancer was, therefore, ·7.

There were 27 deaths from various Zymotic diseases, as against 25 in 1899, giving us a Zymotic death-rate of 1·6, as against 1·4 in the previous year. There were 2 deaths from Scarlet Fever, 2 from Diphtheria, 3 from Enteric Fever, 9 from Influenza, 10 from Diarrhoea, and 1 from Erysipelas.

There was an increase in the number of deaths from Nervous Diseases, from Diseases of the Heart, from Zymotic Diseases, from Tubercle, and from Cancer, while there was a decrease in the deaths due to Diseases of the Respiratory System.

There were 10 deaths from Accident or Violence during the year. In the month of March a man aged 31 died in the Hospital from "Traumatic Delirium following Compound Comminuted Fracture of the Leg." In June a man of 57 died from "Hæmorrhage on the Brain, caused by a fall whilst in a state of intoxication." In July a female child of 5 died from Blood-poisoning, due to a wound in one of the fingers accidentally received. In the same month a woman of 72 died in the Hospital from "Diarrhœa following a fracture of 2 ribs accidentally received." Also in July a young man of 24 died from "Injuries received by a fall from a cart whilst under the influence of drink." In August a male infant 3 days old, was accidentally overlaid by his mother. In August also a boy of 16 died of Pyæmia, following wounds accidently received. In September a woman aged 43 was found drowned in a water-butt, "having placed herself there, with the intention of destroying herself, whilst in a fit of despondency." In October a boy of 10 years. died of "Tetanus following a wound in the neck accidentally received." And in December a little girl of 4 died from "Burns accidentally caused."

During the year there were 13 Inquests held; one in January on a woman of 44, who was found to have died of "Syncope from old standing Heart Disease"; another in February, in the Prison, on a man aged 59, who died of "Tubercular Disease of the Larynx and Lungs"; a third in April on a young man 22 years of age, who was found to have died of Cerebral Hæmorrhage; and the other ten on the causes of death from "Accident or Violence" mentioned above.

There were 3 uncertified deaths; one in January of a man aged 39, the cause of whose death was stated to be "Heart Disease"; another in April of a man 38, who died, according to the statement given, of "Heart Failure"; and a third in August of a woman, 69 years of age, who seems to have died of "Hæmorrhage of the Lungs."

The death-rates in the different divisions of the City were as follows :—

| | | | |
|---------------|---|---|--------------------|
| St. Albans | - | - | 10·9 per thousand. |
| St. Peter's | - | - | 12·8 ,, |
| St. Michael's | - | - | 14·6 ,, |
| Sandridge | - | - | 11·4 ,, |

I think it right to call public attention to the fact, that during the year 1900 5 deaths in St. Albans were ascribed either directly to alcoholism, or to injuries received whilst in a state of intoxication. And there is no doubt that the evil habit of over indulgence in alcoholic beverages, by its tendency to induce disease of various types, is really responsible for a considerably larger number of our deaths.

During the past year there have been 380 births in the City, 183 of males and 197 of females. Of these births 11 were illegitimate. There were 110 births in the District of St. Albans, 191 in St. Peter's, 54 in St. Michael's, 21 in Sandridge, and 4 in the Union Workhouse. The Birth-rate was 23·1 per thousand. In 1899 it was 23·6.

The Birth-rate in the different divisions of the City was as follows :—

| | | | |
|---------------|---|---|-------------------|
| St. Albans | - | - | 22·4 per thousand |
| St. Peter's | - | - | 22·2 ,, |
| St. Michael's | - | - | 24·0 ,, |
| Sandridge | - | - | 30·0 ,, |

The proportion of illegitimate to legitimate births was 28·9 per thousand, as against 37·1 during 1899.

The rate of Mortality amongst Children under 1 year of age per thousand registered births was 100, which is considerably lower than in 1899, when it was 116·7.

Infectious Diseases.

During the year 1900 50 cases of Infectious Disease were notified to me, namely 23 cases of Scarlet Fever, 12 of Diphtheria, 7 of Enteric Fever, 1 of Puerperal Fever, and 7 of Erysipelas. Of the cases of Scarlet Fever 20 were removed to the Sisters' Hospital, as were also 2 of the cases of Diphtheria.

In 1899 85 cases in all were notified; while 45 cases of Scarlet Fever and 3 cases of Diphtheria were admitted into the Hospital.

Scarlet Fever.

There were 7 cases of Scarlet Fever in the St. Albans District, 6 in St. Peter's, 8 in St. Michael's, and 2 in Sandridge.

In the beginning of the year the epidemic of Scarlet Fever which visited us during the latter part of 1899, was dying out, and it disappeared in February. A few

isolated cases, however, continued to occur at intervals throughout the greater part of the year, but they were all promptly isolated and the disease did not spread.

There were 5 cases notified in January, 3 in February, 1 in May, 2 in June, 2 in July, 2 in August, 2 in September, 3 in October, 1 in November, and 2 in December. There were 2 deaths.

I must again request the Medical Practitioners of St. Albans to be specially careful in notifying to insert the age of the patient.

Diphtheria.

The 12 cases of Diphtheria occurred in several different localities, and there was no evident connection between them except that in two instances, 2 members of the same families were attacked. It was only found possible to admit 2 of the cases into Hospital, but the others were all isolated as well as possible in their own homes. There was 1 case in January, 2 cases in March, 2 in April, 2 in October, 1 in November, and 3 in December. There were 2 deaths.

Enteric Fever.

There were 7 cases of Enteric Fever notified during the year, 3 of which proved fatal.

In February a young girl was admitted into the Training Home, Victoria Street. She was ailing when admitted, and a few days afterwards was found to be suffering from Enteric Fever. No insanitary condition of the premises could be discovered, and the case was evidently imported. In February and March two other cases were notified in Victoria Street. There appeared to be no connection between these and the preceding case, and in this house the drains were found to be defective. This insanitary condition has been remedied.

In April a doubtful case was notified from Blacksmith's Lane, apparently unconnected with the former cases. Here no special sanitary defects were discovered.

In November a man in Catherine Street, and in December a boy in St. Peter's Street and a man in Paxton Road, were notified. These cases were all unconnected, and most probably they were all imported.

Influenza.

St. Albans was visited by a severe Epidemic of Influenza in the early part of 1900, as were indeed most other parts of the country. The type of the disease was more severe than usual, and it was directly responsible for 9 deaths, mostly amongst elderly people. There is no doubt, however, that a considerably larger number of deaths were more or less remotely due to this cause.

Measles and Whooping Cough.

The epidemic of Whooping Cough which visited us in 1899, continued to prevail, though to a less degree, during the early part of 1900. And in the latter part of the year Measles again made its appearance amongst us. No death, however, was registered as due to either of these causes. I would once more ask you to include Measles and Whooping Cough in the List of Notifiable Diseases. It is very desirable that your Medical Officer should become aware of the first cases of an epidemic, that he may be the better enabled to take early and energetic action in combating these diseases. Would it be possible to make only the first case in a household notifiable?

Diarrhœa.

During the latter part of the Summer and the Autumn there were a good many cases of Summer or Epidemic Diarrhœa. There were 7 deaths registered from this cause amongst young children, and 3 from Enteritis which were probably due to the same cause. This is somewhat better than the year before, but still it cannot be considered very satisfactory. This disease, which is an infectious one, is associated with want of cleanliness. All milk consumed by infants should be boiled or sterilized and the most scrupulous care taken in keeping all bottles, tubes, and vessels in which the milk is kept, thoroughly clean.

Smallpox Hospital.

We have been trying to make an arrangement with the Smallpox Hospital at Clare Hall, South Mymms, for the reception of any cases of Smallpox which might occur here, and to secure the reservation of a certain number of

beds in that Hospital for our exclusive use, and we have made an application to the Board of Management of the Hospital for that purpose. It is, however, still uncertain whether this arrangement can be entered into. If we fail to come to an agreement, we shall have to consider without delay the question of erecting a small Hospital of our own for Smallpox, either by ourselves or in conjunction with the Rural Authority. We should find ourselves very awkwardly placed in presence of an epidemic, should we have no means of isolating the cases as they occur.

Additional Hospital Accommodation.

I would urge upon you the desirability of providing Hospital Accommodation for Diphtheria and Enteric Fever. At the present time cases of Diphtheria can only be safely admitted into the Sisters' Hospital when there are no Scarlet Fever patients there, which is very rarely the case. It is also very desirable that cases of Enteric Fever occurring in poor households should be removed to a Hospital where they can be well nursed and proper precautions taken to prevent any spread of the disease. This accommodation can be provided either by building a new Hospital, or by adding 2 small additional blocks to the Sisters' Hospital. Such an enlargement of the Sisters' Hospital would answer every purpose, and the expenditure involved on account of building and maintenance would be very much smaller than if you were to erect a new Hospital.

Disinfectors.

I really do hope that it will be found practicable very soon to provide an efficient Steam Disinfectors for the Sisters' Hospital. If St. Albans is to be kept in a good sanitary condition and free from Infectious Disease, it is most important that we should have at hand a ready means of disinfecting all infected clothing and bedding. And as far as the efficiency of our Isolation Hospital is concerned, it is really an absolute necessity that we should be able from time to time thoroughly to disinfect the bedding which is used there, as well as the clothing of the patients treated. This is in very truth one of the most important matters I have to bring under your consideration.

Tuberculosis.

The number of deaths from Tubercle is again high, in fact even higher than in 1899. There were 23 deaths from Phthisis and 7 from other Tubercular affections, making a total of 30, as against 27 last year. The death rate from Phthisis was 1·3 and from Tubercle 1·8, as against 1·3 and 1·6 respectively for 1899. There is no doubt in my mind that a compulsory notification of cases of Phthisis or Consumption would be of great benefit to the community, and would assist us materially in checking the spread of this fatal disease. Persons suffering from Tuberculosis ought not to be allowed to sleep in the same rooms with healthy people, nor should they be allowed to engage in certain occupations, such as the milking of cows. It is of the utmost importance that disinfection of the premises in which a death has occurred from this disease, and also of the bedding and clothing of the patient, should be rigidly enforced. To ensure this it will be necessary that I should have immediate information, either from the Registrar, or from the doctor in attendance, when a death occurs or is registered from this disease. On receipt of this information I should at once give orders to the Inspector of Nuisances to visit the house, and endeavour as far as possible to get the premises and bedding thoroughly disinfected. Of course, as the law is at present, unless we make Tuberculosis notifiable, we can only offer disinfection, and are not in a position to insist upon it. Still I think that the course which I have suggested will be productive of some benefit.

Cancer.

There were 12 deaths from Cancer in 1900, as against 11 in 1899, and 13 in 1898.

Mortuary.

I would call attention to the necessity of providing a Mortuary for the reception of the bodies of persons who have met with violent deaths, or of those in whose cases for other reasons it may be considered necessary, pending an Inquiry by the Coroner. A Mortuary is also really necessary for the purpose of conducting *post-mortem* examinations, which in present circumstances have often to be made in private houses, often under circumstances of exceptional difficulty and with no conveniences at hand.

Cowsheds and Dairies Order.

The New Regulations under the "Dairies and Cowsheds Order of 1889," for prescribing and regulating the lighting, ventilation, air space, cleansing, drainage, and water supply of Cowsheds and Dairies, and which are now practically the same as the Model Regulations issued recently by the Local Government Board, have been approved by the Board, and are now in force in St. Albans.

Tuberculosis in Cows.

To render the Dairies and Cowsheds Order of the Local Government Board of 1899, which deals with the question of Cows suffering from Tuberculosis of the udder, of any practical use, it will be necessary to appoint a Veterinary Inspector, whose duty will be to visit the Cowsheds periodically and examine the cows, to find out if any of them are suffering from the disease, and if so to prohibit the sale of the milk of such cows. I hope that this will shortly be done, as there is not the least doubt that one of the most common causes of Tuberculosis, especially amongst infants and young children, is the consumption of milk supplied by Tuberculous Cows.

Water Supply.

We have had a plentiful supply of pure water in St. Albans throughout the past year. The only drawback to the St. Albans water is its excessive hardness.

Drainage and Sewerage.

The drainage of the City is carried out in a thorough and efficient manner.

Arrangements are now being made for the construction of Bacteria Beds at the Sewage Farm, which will, it is hoped, effectually deal with our Sewage, and entirely prevent any nuisance arising therefrom. This I trust will put an end altogether to the Sewage Farm difficulty. The sanction of the Local Government Board has been obtained and the necessary work will very shortly be commenced.

Ashes and Refuse.

I would again urge upon you the desirability of making arrangements to remove all ashes and refuse from every house within the City at least 2 or 3 times a week. This is more especially necessary in the poorer neighbourhoods. If the household refuse be not regularly and frequently removed the organic matter which it contains will be apt to ferment and putrify and may cause serious injury to health. Galvanised metallic pails with properly fitting metallic covers should be used for the reception of the ashes and other refuse. Dust carts should also be provided with a cover in order to prevent the diffusion into the air of dust which may possibly contain infection.

Common Lodging Houses.

I have visited the different Common Lodging Houses throughout the City and have found them all tolerably clean and well kept, and as far as I can make out not over-crowded.

Cowsheds.

I have inspected the various Cowsheds in the city, and have to report, that in some instances their condition as to cleanliness was not at all satisfactory. I have instructed the Inspector of Nuisances to call the attention of the Cowkeepers to this matter, and I trust that this will be sufficient. It is most important, in order to promote the health of the cows, and consequently the wholesomeness of their milk that they should be kept in a clean and sanitary condition.

Bakehouses.

I have visited all the bakehouses within the City, and have found them on the whole satisfactory. A few of them are, however, situated in cellars underground, and therefore difficult to ventilate properly. There has, however, been a marked improvement in the condition of the bakehouses within the last year or two, and this is certainly a matter for congratulation.

Slaughter Houses.

I have visited all the Slaughter Houses in the City and have found them on the whole as clean and well kept as their structure and situation would permit. As, however, they are nearly all in the central part of the City, and in many cases over-looked by dwelling-houses, I cannot but consider this state of things most unsatisfactory, as the least neglect may render them not only an intolerable nuisance, but also the cause of serious injury to health. I must, therefore, again urge you in the interests of the City to take into your serious consideration, at an early date, the question whether it is not advisable to erect a public abattoir or slaughter house, in a suitable situation, which would be under the direct control of your own officers.

I have visited all the different parts of the City on various occasions during the past year, but have found nothing besides which calls for special comment.

I beg to thank His Worship the Mayor, the Aldermen, and all the Members of the Council for the courtesy and consideration which they have shown me during the year.

My thanks are also due to the Inspector of Nuisances, the Town Clerk, the Surveyor, and all the City officials for their valuable assistance and co-operation.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your most Obedient Servant,

JOHN MORISON, M.D., D.P.H.
Medical Officer of Health.

February 11th, 1901.